

ADDRESS

... TO ...

THE CHURCHES

FROM THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS :

**The Single Tax Association,
The Trades and Labor Council,
The Allied Printing Trades Council,
The International Builders' Laborers' Union,
The International Association of Machinists,
The Toronto Typographical Union,
The Toronto Street Railway Employees' Union and Benefit
Society.**

THE circumstances of the last few years have revealed a most serious condition in the social arrangements of this Continent. With an immeasurable endowment of natural wealth, with the improvement of machinery beyond all parallel, with the means of transportation perfected as never before, with the power of producing wealth in abundance vastly greater than in any other age, we still see the terrible sight of ghastly poverty, of oppressive want, of enforced idleness, and all this in the shadow of palaces with all the outward and visible signs of inordinate luxury.

Is it not true that the larger the city the more evident is the widening of the gulf between the haunts of poverty and the palaces of the millionaires. Is it not manifestly evident that somehow and somewhere in our social arrangements there is an unfortunate want of equity, a terrible miscarriage of justice? When some must toil like slaves and then secure only a fractional part of what they produce, and when others without doing the slightest productive act, can enjoy an abundance of superfluous luxuries, when with the most ample natural opportunities for employment, thousands find it so difficult to secure employment, how can the industrial classes be convinced that equity reigns and justice triumphs?

We trust you will pardon us for submitting to you the following enquiries:—

For whom did the Creator furnish this vast storehouse of natural wealth? What are we to understand by the terms "God the Father,

maker of heaven and earth" and the terms "Dearly beloved brethren"? Are we to understand that he is the universal father and that every child of every generation can come to him with the same filial reverence and say, "My Father, am not I thy child, an heir of thy bounties?" Do you ask us to accept this doctrine of Fatherhood and Brotherhood, this doctrine of equal heirship for all, or are we to understand that herein is a serious mistake, that we are not all equally the heirs to his gifts, but that the bounties of the Creator were a special gift to one portion of humanity, to them and their heirs, "to have and to hold forever?" Are we to regard it as in accordance with equity, that one part of humanity may claim for themselves the power to exclude us from these bounties, and to demand from us an endless tribute for occupying the surface of the planet, so that no matter how abundant may be our productions, we must for ever surrender that abundance for the opportunity of getting access to the common heritage furnished by the Creator?

When the farmer produces food and the clothier produces clothing, and they exchange, we can at once recognize the equity and justice of the transaction. In this transaction we see the fulfilment of the Golden Rule, to do unto others as we would have others do unto us. This is service for service, burden for burden, sacrifice for sacrifice, enrichment for enrichment, and its equity is at once most clearly apparent. There is no difficulty in seeing the justice of the transaction that leaves both parties benefited by a mutual enrichment and we can at once recognize the brotherhood in the injunction: "Bear ye one another's burdens and thus fulfil the law of Christ"

Nor is there any difficulty in understanding that when men have raised crops, built houses, fabricated goods, when they have changed scarcity into abundance, then they have established an unquestionable right to claim abundance.

We ask you now to look at a marked contrast to these examples. The growth of population on this continent is proceeding with very great rapidity, especially in the cities, many of which double their population every ten years. With this increase of population there must necessarily come relative scarcity of land. While, therefore, industry is ever striving to produce abundance of commodities, increased population is necessarily making land more scarce. Now we would like to know by what principle of justice should we, who beget the abundance, have to surrender that abundance and thus have left for ourselves only scarcity, while speculators and other holders of land, claim the abundance that we have produced because land has become scarce?

Is there not something monstrously unjust, awfully inequitable in this arrangement? With every increase in population, with every public improvement, the land holder can claim from us more and more. As the years go by his claim may increase ten fold, twenty

fold, fifty fold, a hundred fold or a thousand fold. Is this because he has increased the productiveness of his energies, and the abundance of his industry? Is it because of his industry that the harvest waves, that dwellings increase, that railroads develop? Not at all, but the very reverse. Does he give abundance for abundance, benefit for benefit? Not at all, but the very reverse. It is out of the abundance of our products that he is licensed by law to appropriate that abundance and to leave us but a meagre relict of penury. The transaction is not enrichment for enrichment, but while we enrich, the land holder impoverishes.

Could there be anything more contrary to the spirit of true religion than this method by which, as fast as one party does the enriching, another party appropriates the riches, leaving the producers in poverty?

The producers of abundance despoiled and left with scarcity; others allowed to appropriate the abundance because land becomes scarce; and by our present arrangements this may continue to the end of time, the obligation of the industrious classes ever increasing, thus insuring their endless impoverishment, the power of the land owner to appropriate the products of industry ever increasing, thus insuring the widening of the gulf between leisured affluence and overworked poverty. Can we be convinced that this is the fruits of righteousness and of that "love which rejoices not in iniquity"?

We have no difficulty in understanding why we should pay the farmer who feeds us, the tailor who clothes us, the teacher who instructs us, and any one who produces for us, or renders us a service; but we cannot possibly understand why we should have to pay any man for access to the land, the forest, the minerals or the other things that man never furnished, any more than we should have to pay him for the sunlight, the air or any other gift of the Creator, and it is equally difficult to understand why we should have to pay an increasing amount of our productions to land holders because the increase of population makes land more scarce. Is not the whole system of land speculation an attempt to secure the products of industry by the impoverishment of the producers; how can it succeed except by the spoliation and degradation of industry? Is it not a wrong that should receive the most emphatic condemnation of the whole church?

You urge us, you plead with us, you beseech us to come and unite with you and to yield ourselves to the claims of religion. But what kind of religion do you ask us to adopt? A religion that rejoices in equity, that loves justice and hates iniquity; or a religion that looks on the spoliation of labor, if not with complacency at any rate too often in silent tolerance or even acquiescence? A religion that recognizes every child of God as equally the heir of God, the heir to the bounties of the All-Father-Creator, or a religion that ignores the

fact that the earth with all its potentialities is the gift of God to his children? A religion that seeks to secure all the benefits and rewards of an advancing civilization to those who bear the burden of begetting and supporting that civilization, or a religion that secures the benefits of civilization to the full and overflowing to those, who not merely contribute nothing whatever to its maintenance, but who by their mischievous dog-in-the-manger speculations, often stand in the way of its progress? A religion that demands obedience before sacrifice, or a religion that substitutes charity for justice and cast-off clothing for the principles of righteousness!

Is it not vain to expect men to join with enthusiastic devotion in the propagation of a professed religion that unfortunately ignores the highest claims of religion, that repeats, "Our Father who art in heaven," but ignores the fatherhood on earth, that initiates its service with "Dearly beloved brethren," and then splits society into lordlings and serfs, that enjoins honesty and then fosters and rewards despoiling speculations, that with the lips extols peace and unity, love and justice, but, alas! alas! maintains in operation forces that beget hostility and discord, strikes and lockouts, riots and labor wars?

The universal and unvarying testimony of the ages endorses the truth, "As ye sow, so shall ye also reap." To sow the seeds of injustice and to expect the fruits of righteousness, to plant the apples of discord and then to look for the fruits of peace, is to look for limpid purity in the stream, while maintaining putrescent corruption in the fountain, it is to look for grapes from thorns and figs from thistles.

With all respect we submit to you these thoughts as transcendently the most important to which we could call your attention.

